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NSC BRIEFING

26 FEBRUARY 1956

### SOVIET 20TH PARTY CONGRESS

A. The 20th Party Congress (14-25 February) gives the clearest definition we have had of trends in Soviet affairs. These trends began to emerge about the time of Stalin's death, became more definite with the purge of Beria and Malenkov's demotion. Now they are clearly defined.

Aside:

Party First Secretary Khrushchev dominated the Congress: his 8-hour, 50,000-word political report took up the whole of the Congress' opening day; his revision of two important Communist dogmas was a solid demonstration of authority.

The wordage at the Congress was fantastic; we calculate roughly half a million words--a volume of about 900 pages, approximately the size of Gone With The Wind. Whatever else we think of them, we have to give these boys credit for stamina.

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B. The 20th Party Congress adds up to this: The present collective leadership, ("Collective Dictatorship," Bohlen suggests calling it), headed by Khrushchev, Bulganin, Mikoyan and Kaganovich, is accomplishing a peaceful revolution designed to bury Stalinism and strip Kremlin policy of much of the impedimenta accumulated during 20 years of absolute domination by Stalin, i.e.,--

1. Absolute dictatorship based on naked police power.
2. Primary reliance on force and threat of military power to achieve Communist ends.
3. Grim thesis of inevitability of war and violent revolution.

C. The Soviet leaders, after faltering, and even retreating (Greece, Korea, Austria, Yugoslavia, Port Arthur, and Porkkala), in the face of stout Western political, economic and military resistance in the later years of Stalin's life and the immediate post-Stalin era, appear to have achieved a new political sophistication and are challenging US and Western positions with subtler weapons.

NSC Paper: "Communist tactics against the Free Nations have shifted in emphasis from reliance on violence and the threat of violence to reliance on division, enticement, and duplicity."

D. The three years since Stalin's death have been occupied in political, economic and military readjustments designed to clean up the Soviet backyard and to eliminate sore points that were making the Soviet system unappealing politically and ineffective in diplomacy.

Mikoyan: "The leading collective body of the Party introduced a new, fresh course.... Certain ossified forms of our diplomacy, of our foreign trade and economic organs in their relations with foreign countries... were discarded."

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E. Three main anti-Stalinist ideas expressed at the Party Congress stand out from the welter of words.

1. Collective leadership: These veterans of Stalin's cruel tyranny have at least outwardly committed themselves to this. It is not likely to work indefinitely, but--while it does--it gives a flexibility to Soviet policy that may make it more dangerous than the "hard" period of Stalin's last years.

Mikoyan: "The principle of collective leadership is elementary for the proletarian party, for the Lenin-type party. However, we must emphasize this old truth because in the course of about 20 years, we in fact had no collective leadership. The cult of personality was flourishing--already condemned by Marx and afterward by Lenin--and this course could not help exerting an extremely negative influence on the situation within the Party and in its work."

Khrushchev: "The furthering of the Party's unity and the raising of the activity of its organizations demanded the restoration of the norms of Party life elaborated by Lenin, which have previously been often violated. Of primary importance was the restoration and complete consolidation of Lenin's principle of collectivity in leadership."

2. "Peaceful coexistence" and denial of the "fatal inevitability of war": These propaganda themes likely to last a good many years, because the Kremlin now recognizes that Stalin was making things easy for us by frightening small nations into cooperation with the US from a dread of general war or direct Soviet military aggression.
- "Peaceful coexistence"--

Khrushchev: "There are only two ways: either peaceful coexistence or the most destructive war in history. There is no third way.... It is common knowledge that we have always, from the very first years of Soviet power, stood with equal firmness for peaceful coexistence. Hence it is not a tactical move, but a

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Khrushchev: "War is not fatilistically inevitable."

The "secret" texts before the 20th Party Congress:

Lenin (1919): "...the existence of the Soviet Republic side by side with imperialist states for a long time is unthinkable. One or the other must triumph in the end, and before that end supervenes, a series of frightful collisions between the Soviet Republic and the bourgeois states will be inevitable."

Stalin (1952): "In order to eliminate the inevitability of wars, imperialism must be destroyed."

3. Peaceful parliamentary "Transition to socialism" (which of course in Soviet jargon means Communist control). This is a signal for full speed ahead on the "popular front" in capitalist political arenas like France, Italy, and Indonesia.

Khrushchev: "The present situation offers the working class in a number of capitalist countries a real opportunity to unite the overwhelming majority of the people under its leadership....In these circumstances, the working class...is in a position to defeat the reactionary forces opposed to the popular interest, to capture a stable majority in parliament, and transform the latter from an organ of bourgeois democracy into a genuine instrument of peoples' will."

Mikoyan: "By force of the favorable postwar situation in Czechoslovakia the socialist revolution was carried out by peaceful means. Communists came into power after having allied themselves not only with the parties of the working people which were close to them but also with the bourgeois parties which supported the common national front."

The old dogma was, according to Stalin (1938): "The transition from capitalism to socialism and the liberation of the working class from the yoke of capitalism cannot be effected by slow changes, by reforms, but only by revolution."

F. Old Communist leaders in France and Italy have been shaken by Soviet repudiation of Stalinism. But this may give new leaders a chance, now, to revitalize their parties and appeal to respectable intellectual and working-class support, previously repelled by the unfailing subordination of local interests to Soviet policy.

G. Khrushchev, Bulganin, Mikoyan and Kaganovich evidently are gambling that they can push American influence off the Eurasian continent without war--by political, economic and subversive pressures alone.

H. There have been differing reactions in Communist circles throughout the world.

1. Yugoslavia: The Tito regime finds the developments at the Congress very much to its liking. The Yugoslavs have already been citing these developments as evidence of the correctness of their policies in the present international situation. The Yugoslav press has stressed the extent to which the USSR has adopted views similar to Yugoslav doctrine, in particular, the existence of differing roads to socialism.
2. France: French Communist Party leaders, in contrast, are obviously embarrassed and have largely kept out of their paper, L'Humanite, Moscow's repudiation of Stalinism and rigid ideological conformity.
3. Satellites: Some trouble is likely to develop with the Satellite regimes, which have always been kept under heavy Soviet thumb. They now see Tito's struggle against Stalinist dictation paying off handsomely, and "differing roads to socialism" endorsed by Moscow.

4. Communist China: Peiping is being polite, although some Chinese may feel Khrushchev's pretensions to being an ideologist lessen the stature of Mao Tse-tung, who is recognized as having "creatively interpreted" Marxism-Leninism.

1. The whole Soviet regime again dedicated itself to maintaining a rapid pace of development of industrial, and nuclear, strength.

Khrushchev: "Statistics show that in a quarter of a century...the Soviet Union increased its industrial output more than 20 fold despite the tremendous damage done to its national economy by the war. Meanwhile, the United States, which enjoyed exceptionally favorable conditions, was only able to slightly more than double its production, while industry in the capitalist world as a whole failed to register even that growth."

Saburov: "It is true that we have not yet caught up to the United States in the volume of the quantity of industrial production per capita and, so far, in the general volume of industrial production.. However, the pace of our development, which by many times exceeds the pace of growth in the United States, permits us to overcome this lagging within a very short historic period of time."

Among the many sources of future Soviet economic strength cited in lyric terms at the Congress, was the development of atomic power.

Bulganin: "...While the 19th Century was mainly the century of steam, the 20th Century, the century of electricity, is beginning under our eyes to be transformed into the century of atomic energy....We Communists must fully place the greatest discovery of the 20th Century, atomic energy, at the service of the cause whose implementation is the ultimate programmatic goal of our party--the cause of building Communism. In the peaceful use of atomic energy, our country is ahead of other countries. This leading role we must consolidate also in the future."

J. Soviet leaders made it clear that the USSR's military strength will be maintained at a high level, although they emphasized that Soviet military power would be employed only defensively, or as a deterrent to Western initiation of hostilities.

Marshal Zhukov: "The USSR is protected by diverse atomic and thermonuclear weapons, powerful rocket-propelled and jet-propelled armaments of various types, including long range missiles."

Mikoyan: "...In the event of American aggression, hydrogen bombs can in return fall on American cities too...Hydrogen and atomic warfare can bring about great devastation, but it cannot result in the destruction of mankind and its regime of capitalism in its imperialist stage. Communism has no need of war. It is against war; the ideas of Communists will triumph without war."

K. The policy themes stressed by Soviet leaders at the Congress are directed at:

1. Reducing fear of Soviet resort to war to expand the USSR's sphere of dominance.
2. Rendering more palatable Soviet and local Communist political methods, so as to facilitate the formation of popular front governments in non-Communist countries.
3. Enhancing Soviet prestige in Asia and Africa.

L. Khrushchev included "peace-loving" neutral states in both Asia and Europe, along with the Sino-Soviet bloc, in a vast "zone of peace" where Soviet leaders expect to play a decisive role.

**Kaganovich:** "Lenin, analyzing the prospects of world development, wrote 33 years ago: 'The issue of the struggle ultimately depends upon the fact that Russia, India, and China comprise the gigantic majority of the population, and it is just this majority of the population that has been coming together at an unprecedented speed in recent years in the struggle for their liberation. There cannot be the slightest doubt of what the final outcome of the world struggle will be. In this respect the ultimate victory of socialism is fully and undoubtedly assured.'"

"Now the whole world is watching this remarkable prophecy of the genius of mankind, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, come true."

M. All the speeches of the Soviet leaders make it clear that the capture of power, establishment of "dictatorships of the proletariat," and the revolutionary transformation of society remain the ultimate aims of Communist parties. Khrushchev's revisions of Communist dogma constitute mainly an admission that these long-term Communist objectives can be reached by means hitherto considered unrealistic and for that reason wrong.



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**BACKGROUND--CONGRESS STATISTICS**

**A. Estimated time and length of six main speeches:**

Khrushchev	8 hours	50,000 words	comprehensive, authoritative.
Bulgaria	4 hours	25,000 words	routine--mostly on Sixth Five Year Plan.
Mikoyan	1 hour 45 minutes	10,000 words	comprehensive, colorful, pungent in phrasing.
Kaganovich	1 hour 30 minutes	9,000 words	routine, almost technical economic.
Malenkov	1 hour 15 minutes	8,000 words	surprisingly general but very cautious, full of quotes from Lenin, Bulk on electric power.
Molotov	1 hour	7,500 words	apologetic, nearly all on foreign policy.

**B. Total wordage of Party Congress speeches will approach half a million.**

1. Sixteen members (of a total of 17) of Party Presidium (top circle--old Politburo) and Party Secretariat were speakers at the Congress. Ponomarenko did not speak, which may mean a loss of status.

New Presidium being elected Monday (27 February).

2. Each speech is followed by "debate" from the floor, i.e., thanks to speaker and laudatory remarks from various delegates. For example, Khrushchev's day-long oration was followed by remarks from 51 "debators."